

This project sets out to determine how a regional identity, and thus the so-called “provincial society” emerged in the provinces of the Roman Empire on the Rhine and the Danube. The fundamental element in that process was that the local (“barbarian”) population became mingled with the immigrant population from within the Empire (e.g. veterans and tradespeople, as well as other groups of settlers), with a significant influence of the Roman army. In consequence, these areas adopted much of the Roman lifestyle, though some of the local customs remained; the process is referred to as Romanization. In order to study how the regional identity came into being, one has to analyse the aspects which are characteristic of the history of the provinces: Romanization and urbanization. The universally accepted paradigm presumes a reciprocal feedback between Romanization and urbanization: it was impossible to attain the desired degree of Romanization without suitable urban structures, while at the same time establishment of Roman cities in the full sense of the word was conditional upon the high degree of Romanization in a given area. There is no doubt that Romanization was the superior phenomenon, while urbanization was its component. Also, it was the extent and the depth of Romanization as a cultural phenomenon which gave the ultimate shape to regional/local identity. The choice of the area for research, i.e. nine provinces located on the frontier of the Roman state, along the lines of the Rhine and the Danube, is justified by its particular nature. The provinces bordered on Barbaricum, a powerful external factor, had a very sizeable military contingent on their territories (with half of the Roman legions and thousands of auxiliaries stationed on both rivers in the 2nd century) and were considerably diversified in terms of ethnic composition. The latter increased even more with the frequent resettlements of large groups of people from beyond the Empire. Another significant phenomena included certain proto-urban element (such as the so-called oppida, especially in the provinces on the Rhine and the upper Danube) and long-lasting traditions of township on the coast of the Black Sea (Greek urbanization, which left six cities, dates as far back as the 7th century BCE). As we will strive to obtain the most lucid final outcome, we have decided to focus our studies on the most characteristic urban centres. The localities selected as the objects of our investigations had to: have been established in the vicinity or in the former location of the encampments of legions and other units, develop from the indigenous settlements (pre-Roman ones), including those which Romans translocated (vide: oppida); or be built by Romans “from scratch”, without any connection with military activity. Thus, in terms of topography, the list includes cities located directly on the frontier (Rhine, Danube) as well as those farther away into the province, or at its opposite end.

The project will rely on interdisciplinary research, which combines the competences and skills of historian, epigrapher and archaeologist. Our analyses will be based on epigraphical sources (inscriptions) and archaeological material (artefacts in the museums, structural remnants at the archaeological sites, documentation from excavations), because narrative accounts offer very scanty information. This will be accompanied by critical analysis of relevant literature. The conclusions drawn following the analyses of various types of sources will then be confronted with one another, enabling us to validate the thesis concerning the depth of Romanization of the society with inhabited the provincial cities, and eliminate the risk of errors in interpretation, which usually appear when analysing only one type of sources. In order to conduct such analyses, the researchers intend to carry out preliminary research in libraries and investigate the artefacts found in the museums and *in situ*.

The studies of archaeological and epigraphical artefacts are aimed at solving a number of research problems, the most important of which are: a. to develop a theoretical model: Romanization, urbanization, Romanization and urbanization; the understanding of Romanization in the context of contemporary debates; b. investigate the factors which had an impact on the creation of cities before and after Roman conquest; c. determine how barbarian cultures intermingled with Roman culture; d. learn how Romanization affected the landscape of provinces; e. examine Romanization in the domains of religion (*interpretatio romana*), funeral customs and art; f. study the formal and legal rules according to which cities functioned; g. study the onomastics of the inhabitants of provincial cities.

Research thus oriented in an altogether original one, as these issues have never been addressed in such a fashion, and therefore no equivalent studies have been published so far. There are however, very numerous fragmentary studies which discuss urbanization, cultural phenomena (Romanization), economy, as well as military or religious aspects. This broad approach to Romanization of urbanized areas will foster comprehension of the mechanism underlying the formation of provincial society with such a multicultural and multi-ethnic background. In addition, it will contribute to a more complete picture of the Roman administration and deeper understanding of methods which served to “consolidate” the vast Roman Empire.